DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 364 380 RC 019 401

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TITLE Attrition in Texas Public High Schools.
PUB DATE Oct 93
NOTE 7p.; Two pages of statistics contain small type.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Journal Articles (080)
JOURNAL CIT IDRA Newsletter; v20 n9 p6-10 Oct 1993

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Dropout Rate; Dropout Research; Dropouts; *Enrollment Trends; High Schools; *High School Students; *Minority Groups; Public Schools; Racial Differences; Sex Differences; *Student Attrition
IDENTIFIERS *Texas

ABSTRACT

This report summarizes Intercultural Development Research Association analyses of attrition rates for high school students enrolled in Texas public high schools. Enrollment figures were examined for students who were in the 9th grade during the 1988-89 school year and students who were in the 12th grade during 1991-92, and results were compared to those of previous annual studies. Findings indicate that: (1) the rate of attrition (33 percent) has remained virtually constant over a 7-year period from 1985-86 to 1991-92, with Hispanics having the highest percentage of dropouts; (2) the annual number of students lost from public high school enrollment through attrition has remained virtually constant over the 7-year period; and (3) attrition rates were higher for ethnic minority students than for White non-Hispanic students and for males compared to females. These findings are consistent with the trends reported by the Texas Education Agency. Additional research should examine the effectiveness of dropout prevention initiatives, particularly as they relate to minority groups and males. In addition, school districts need to establish better record keeping with regard to reasons why students drop out of school and their status after they fail to attend school. A school district network should be established to keep track of student attrition. Attrition rates are listed by county and race. (LP)

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ED 364 380

ATTRITION IN TEXAS PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS

Roy Johnson, M.S.

IDRA Newsletter - October 1993

RC019401

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ATTRITION IN TEXAS PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS

Roy Johnson, M.S.

The issue of students leaving school prior to graduation continues to be a major challenge to education here in Texas and across the United States. Despite the many initiatives designed to keep students in school, the dropout problem continues to persist as far too many students leave school before they complete high school. Results from the 1990 Census showed that over 135,000 Texas residents between the ages of 16 to 19 left school without completing grade 12. The most recent dropout data from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) showed that 53,421 students in grades 7-12 dropped out of school during the 1991-92 school year. Attrition analyses conducted by the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) show that about 90,000 students were lost from public high school enrollment between their ninth grade year in 1988-89 and their twelfth grade year in 1991-92.

In 1986 IDRA conducted the first comprehensive analysis of school dropouts in the state of Texas. This effort was conducted during the period of May 1986 and October 1986 under contract with the Texas Department of Community Affairs (now the Texas Department of Commerce) and the Texas Education Agency. It focused on the magnitude of the dropout problem, its economic impact, and the nature and effectiveness of dropout prevention programs in Texas.

IDRA's original study on the magnitude of the dropout problem in Texas utilized a three-fold methodological approach: (1) district self-reports to TEA, (2) analyses of census data on graduation levels, and (3) estimates of dropouts based on school enrollments and longitudinal attrition. Because of the many definitions and methodologies used by districts to establish their dropout rates, the component based on district self-reports was discontinued in the early stages of the 1986 study. The census data and attrition aspects of the study were continued and subsequently provided similar and mutually-validated research findings. These findings were published by IDRA in *Texas School Dropout Survey Project: A Summary of Findings*.

Beginning with the 1985-86 school year, IDRA has conducted annual longitudinal attrition analyses using a constant methodology in order to document and assess the magnitude of the school dropout problem in the state of Texas. This yearly study continues to provide invaluable data on dropout trends. In the aftermath of IDRA's 1986 study, TEA has conducted its own annual study beginning with the 1987-88 school year based on district self-reports in the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS).

This article presents the results of the IDRA attrition analyses for the 1991-92 school year. The study looked at high school students enrolled in Texas public high schools at the ninth grade level in the 1988-89 school year and the twelfth grade enrolling in 1991-92. Results are presented for 252 of the 254 Texas counties; two counties (Kenedy and Loving) do not have high schools.

IDRA's Attrition Model

IDRA has developed a technique for estimating the number of students lost from Texas public schools as a result of attrition. The formula for computing the longitudinal attrition rates consists of taking grade level enrollment for a base year and comparing these figures to grade level enrollment in a subsequent or end year, with the assumption that a decline in the number of students enrolled constitutes the attrition rate for the school or district and that the cohort attrition rate is closely related to the annual dropout rate. IDRA's longitudinal attrition analyses allow for increases and decreases in a district's enrollment figures.

Since school district enrollment may not be constant from school year to school year, differences in enrollment are adjusted by the increase or decrease in total high school enrollment. Specifically, IDRA's attrition methodology takes a school district's enrollment in the ninth grade of a specific school year and compares this enrollment with the adjusted twelfth grade enrollment three years later. Special school districts (military and special education) are not included since they are likely to have unstable enrollments and/or because they do not have a tax base in support of the school program. Enrollment data used in the study are obtained from the Texas Education Agency's Fall Membership Survey.

The IDRA attrition model makes three additional assumptions. The first is that the number of students transferring in and out of school districts is fairly evenly divided among the various grades included in the longitudinal time span. The second assumption is that the majority of student transfers occur within the state and would therefore be accounted for in the state total. Third, the number of students retained at each grade level is fairly constant from one year to the next.

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LONGITUDINAL ATTRITION RATES IN TEXAS PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS 1985-86 TO 1991-92

RACE-ETHNICITY GROUP	1985-1986	1986-1987	1987-1988	1988-1989	1989-1990	1991-1992	% CHANGE FROM 1985-86 TO 1991-92
Native American	45	39	37	47	39	40	-11
Asian/Pacific Islander	33	30	28	23	22	21	-36
Black	34	38	39	37	38	39	+15
White	27	26	24	20	19	22	-19
Hispanic	45	46	49	48	48	48	+7
Total	33	34	33	31	31	34	+3

Figures calculated by IDRA from Texas Education Agency Fall Membership Survey data.

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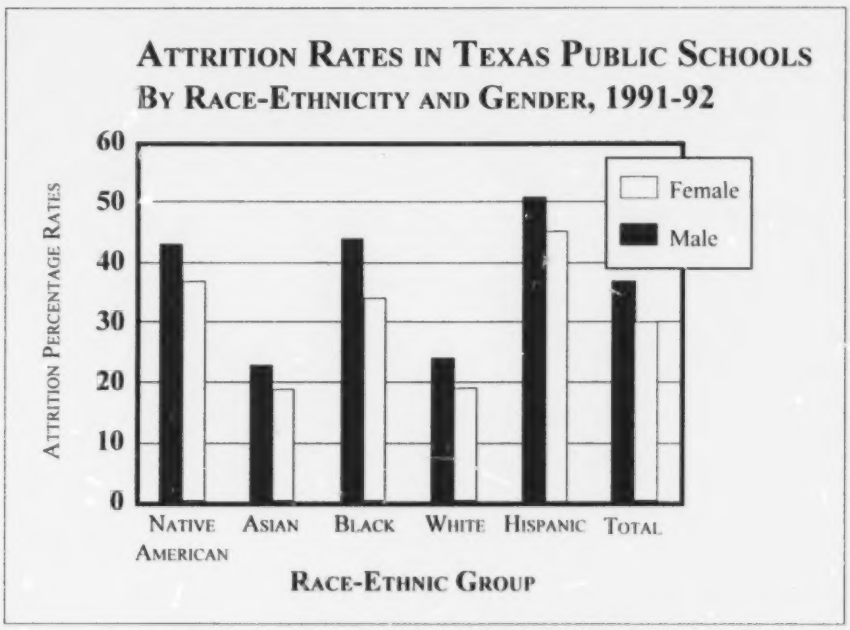
Major Findings of the Attrition Analyses

The IDRA study of attrition rates for the 1991-92 school year analyzed enrollment figures for students who were in the ninth grade in 1988-89 and students who were in the twelfth grade in 1991-92. Enrollment data from TEA's Fall Membership Survey for the 1988-89 and 1991-92 school years were utilized for the study.

The major findings of the most recent attrition analyses are presented in the graph below. Many of these findings are validated by the TEA's 1991-92 dropout report, completed in May 1993, though some differences were noted. Where possible, these similarities and difference in the findings will be noted.



Data compiled by IDRA from the Texas Education Agency's 1991 Fall Membership Survey.

During the 1988-89 school year, there were 263,763 students enrolled in the ninth grade. Of these students, 469 (0.2%) were Native American, 4,833 (1.8%) were Asian American, 88,053 (33.4%) were Hispanic, 39,382 (14.9%) were Black, and 131,026 (49.7%) were White. Total high school enrollment (grades 9-12) during this year was 878,561. Of these, 1,495 (0.2%) were Native American, 17,891 (2.0%) were Asian American, 256,013 (29.1%) were Hispanic, 125,708 (14.3%) were Black, and 477,454 (54.3%) were White.

The twelfth grade enrollment during 1991-92 was comprised of 177,031 students. Of this number, 322 (0.2%) were Native American, 4,587 (2.6%) were Asian American, 51,258 (29.0%) were Hispanic, 23,220 (13.1%) were Black, and 97,644 (55.2%) were White. The total high school enrollment (grades 9-12) during this year totaled 888,003. Of these, 1,722 (0.2%) were Native American, 21,410 (2.4%) were Asian American, 288,417 (32.5%) were Hispanic, 122,040 (13.7%) were Black, and 454,414 (51.1%) were White.

The rate of attrition has remained virtually constant over a seven-year period from 1985-86 to 1991-92. The IDRA attrition study shows that the rate of attrition in public high school enrollment increased slightly from 33% in 1985-86 to 34% in 1991-92. This represents a three percent (3%) increase over the seven-year period. Over the seven-year period, attrition rates ranged from a low of 31% in 1988-89 and 1989-90 to a high of 34% in 1986-87 and 1991-92, as shown in the chart on page 6. The charts on pages 9 and 10 present the Texas school attrition rates by county for the 1991-92 school year.

TEA, however, reports that the annual dropout rate in the state's public education system declined consistently from 6.7% in 1987-88 to 3.8% in 1991-92. The annual dropout rates for other years included 6% in 1988-89, 5.1% in 1989-90, and 3.9% in 1990-91. TEA's longitudinal dropout rates included 34% in 1987-88, 31.3% in 1988-89, 27.2% in 1989-90, 21.4% in 1990-91 and 20.7% in 1991-92.

The number of students lost from public high school enrollment has remained virtually constant over a seven-year period from 1985-86 to 1991-92. The number of students (in grades 9-12) lost from public school enrollment through attrition increased from about 86,000 in 1985-86 to about 90,000 in 1991-92. Minority students comprised about 48.8% of the high school student population in 1991-92, but accounted for 70.3% of the students lost through attrition. For the period between 1987-88 and 1991-92, there was a small reduction in the number of students lost through attrition from about 91,000 in 1987-88 to about 90,000 in 1991-92. The number of students leaving Texas public high schools in other years included 90,000 in 1986-87, 87,000 in 1988-89, and 84,000 in 1989-90.

By contrast, TEA found that the number of students (in grades 7-12) leaving the state's public education system declined consistently from 91,307 in 1987-88 to 53,421 in 1991-92. The number of dropouts reported by TEA: 82,325 in 1988-89, 70,040 in 1989-90, and 53,421 in 1990-91.

Ethnic minority students were more likely to be lost from school enrollment than White, non-Hispanic students when adjusted for population size. Hispanic students were 2.2 times more likely to be lost from public high school enrollment through attrition than White students, while Black students were 1.9 times and Native American students were 2.4 times more likely to be lost through attrition than White students. Asian American students were 1.0 times less likely to be lost from public high school enrollment through attrition than White students.

TEA found that Hispanics were 2.2 times more likely to drop out of school than White students; Blacks and Native Americans were 1.9 times more likely to drop out of school than White students; and Asian American students were 1.1 times more likely to drop out of school than White students.

More males were lost from public high school enrollment through attrition than females. Fifty-seven percent (57%) of students lost from public high school enrollment were male versus the 43% that were female. For each race-ethnic group, males were more likely to be lost from school enrollment due to attrition than females as shown in the graph above. The difference in the percent of males and females lost through attrition was particularly acute for Black students.

In TEA's study of 1991-92 dropout statistics, it was found that 54% of the

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dropouts were male while 46% of dropouts were female.

Conclusions

The latest attrition analyses conducted by IDRA show that the number and percent of students lost from enrollment in Texas public schools has remained constant over a seven-year period from 1985-86 to 1991-92. The findings of the IDRA attrition analyses concerning the gender and race-ethnicity of dropouts are consistent with the trends reported by TEA; the major difference between the two studies appears in the number and rate of students reported lost from public high school enrollment.

Results of the latest dropout and attrition studies suggest that much still needs to be done toward solving Texas' dropout problem. Additional research must be conducted to examine the effectiveness of dropout prevention initiatives, particularly as they relate to minority group members and males. Greater attention should also be paid to the manner in which dropout statistics are collected and reported. To determine the accuracy of district self-reports, the state education agency should conduct periodic audits of district records to assess the reliability of the data reported through PEIMS.

Additionally, school districts should be required to keep better records on (1) the *reasons students drop out* of school, and (2) students' *status after they fail to attend* their last known school of record. Further, districts should be required to track student transfers within and outside of the school district. A network system between school districts - particularly districts in a particular city, county or region - should be established and maintained to keep track of student attrition. Broader implementation of dropout prevention programs that have proven effective should be conducted. Lastly, legislative action must be undertaken to address and develop responses to the dropout problem.

Roy Johnson is a Senior Research Associate in the IDRA Division of Research and Evaluation.

Attrition Rates in Texas Public Schools: By Race-Ethnicity, 1991-92

County Name	Attrition Rates[1] Black	White	Hispanic	Total
Anderson	38	28	59	32
Andrews	**	22	39	28
Angelina	7	17	46	19
Aransas	**	33	39	32
Archer	100	19	0	19
Armstrong	.	23	**	16
Atascosa	38	16	36	28
Austin	20	18	52	22
Bailey	51	**	45	28
Bandera	20	34	30	33
Bastrop	29	30	57	36
Baylor	**	16	42	13
Bee	53	6	45	33
Bell	30	16	28	20
Bexar	37	17	45	35
Blanco	.	0	41	10
Borden	.	12	**	8
Bosque	55	40	33	40
Bowie	27	18	24	20
Brazoria	37	33	54	38
Brazos	36	18	59	29
Brewster	.	3	17	13
Briscoe	50	12	100	40
Brooks	.	18	41	39
Brown	39	23	35	26
Burleson	5	29	35	25
Burnet	**	31	65	36
Caldwell	32	14	46	32
Calhoun	25	34	43	38
Callahan	.	15	21	15
Cameron	55	28	48	47
Camp	15	25	71	25
Carson	0	18	70	21
Cass	19	21	8	20
Castro	49	11	38	27
Chambers	**	25	52	23
Cherokee	33	27	70	31
Childress	19	**	54	18
Clay	.	10	11	11
Cochran	9	40	48	43
Coke	.	27	33	29
Coleman	54	25	59	34
Collin	38	14	52	19
Collingsworth	10	**	37	13
Colorado	22	21	47	28
Comal	**	8	31	14
Comanche	.	11	35	17
Concho	.	2	3	**
Cooke	9	21	50	22
Coryell	37	30	46	32
Cottle	**	26	39	20
Crane	100	15	31	25
Crockett	.	12	31	26
Crosby	**	17	26	21
Culberson	.	54	55	56
Dallam	38	11	57	21
Dallas	47	22	65	39
Dawson	7	13	36	26
Deaf Smith	12	**	40	25
Delta	4	24	0	19

County Name	Attrition Rates[1] Black	White	Hispanic	Total
Denton	25	23	46	25
Dewitt	11	24	45	30
Dickens	100	**	46	6
Dimmit	0	37	38	38
Donley	56	23	**	20
Duval	100	**	18	12
Eastland	72	20	45	24
Ector	39	31	51	40
Edwards	.	**	7	3
Ellis	27	24	45	28
El Paso	44	20	44	40
Erath	100	18	53	23
Falls	17	27	19	23
Fannin	**	17	42	16
Fayette	**	7	41	11
Fisher	**	2	22	10
Floyd	.	28	39	35
Foard	38	17	8	16
Fort Bend	41	22	53	35
Franklin	44	26	47	27
Freestone	1	9	35	8
Frio	33	22	41	38
Gaines	36	33	36	34
Galveston	45	23	52	31
Garza	24	10	41	24
Gillespie	.	7	36	13
Glasscock	.	35	22	33
Goliad	100	**	14	8
Gonzales	20	23	42	32
Gray	23	17	70	24
Grayson	26	24	35	24
Gregg	46	22	53	29
Grimes	44	15	64	32
Guadalupe	37	24	43	32
Hale	27	19	47	36
Hall	2	23	44	28
Hamilton	.	11	45	14
Hansford	.	9	17	11
Hardeman	16	10	57	20
Hardin	24	26	**	25
Harris	47	26	62	41
Harrison	29	30	26	29
Hartley	.	**	25	**
Haskell	21	18	24	19
Hays	29	22	35	28
Hemphill	.	13	38	16
Henderson	8	25	50	24
Hidalgo	49	17	47	45
Hill	30	15	44	21
Hockley	21	11	28	17
Hood	81	27	66	29
Hopkins	**	18	68	18
Houston	27	28	81	29
Howard	16	21	50	31
Hudspeth	100	24	38	36
Hunt	44	26	51	30
Hutchinson	**	24	48	25
Irion	.	29	10	22
Jack	50	23	82	26
Jackson	**	13	21	14

[1]Calculated by multiplying the 1988-89 ninth grade enrollment by the percent change in total ninth to twelfth enrollment from 1988-89 to 1991-92 and adding this sum to the 1988-89 ninth grade enrollment. The total may not equal the sum of the groups due to rounding; by subtracting the 1991-92 twelfth grade enrollment from the expected 1991-92 twelfth grade enrollment and then dividing the difference by the expected 1991-92 twelfth grade enrollment. The attrition rate results (percentage) are rounded to the nearest whole number.

** = Attrition rate is less than 0.

. = The necessary data are unavailable to calculate the attrition rate.

ATTRITION RATES IN TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS: BY RACE-ETHNICITY, 1991-92 (CONTINUED)

COUNTY NAME	ATTRITION RATES[1]			
	BLACK	WHITE	HISPANIC	TOTAL
JASPER	8	19	35	17
JEFF DAVIS	100	52	14	51
JEFFERSON	32	17	37	25
JIM HOGG	.	**	16	14
JIM WELLS	65	9	24	22
JOHNSON	37	28	61	32
JONES	0	17	24	19
KARNES	5	**	23	12
KAUFMAN	36	32	56	34
KENDALL	.	4	45	13
KENT	.	38	20	36
KERR	48	13	56	23
KIMBLE	.	42	53	46
KING	.	43	0	38
KINNEY	100	27	46	41
KLEBERG	22	29	50	44
KNOX	47	8	43	23
LAMAR	9	5	24	6
LAMB	32	17	44	32
LAMPASAS	65	20	33	23
LA SALLE	.	28	50	46
LAVACA	14	8	13	9
LEE	41	18	60	27
LEON	**	26	**	18
LIBERTY	21	33	51	32
LIMESTONE	15	25	59	25
LIPSCOMB	.	7	18	8
LIVE OAK	.	10	27	17
LLANO	.	24	22	23
LUBBOCK	23	10	36	20
LYNN	**	**	36	18
MADISON	33	23	36	26
MARION	31	15	.	25
MARTIN	**	4	43	23
MASON	.	9	29	14
MATAGORDA	27	29	53	37
MAVERICK	.	15	37	36
MCCULLOCH	**	30	3	18
MCLENNAN	30	20	52	28
MCMULLEN	.	28	**	5
MEDINA	17	17	37	28
MENARD	.	45	**	24
MIDLAND	31	19	48	28
MILAM	29	21	44	26
MILLS	.	11	52	18
MITCHELL	26	13	14	14
MONTAGUE	.	12	46	13
MONTGOMERY	37	25	43	27
MOORE	**	22	42	29
MORRIS	19	26	**	23
MOTLEY	0	3	8	**
NACOGDOCHES	27	20	63	24
NAVARRO	3	21	43	18
NEWTON	12	18	.	16
NOLAN	1	16	23	18
NUECES	33	18	31	27
OCHILTREE	.	12	16	13
OLDHAM	.	13	**	13
ORANGE	38	24	15	25
PALO PINTO	35	32	58	36
PANOLA	25	29	40	28
PARKER	35	35	67	37
PARMER	**	5	33	20
PECOS	.	16	30	25
POLK	32	39	57	38
POTTER	45	19	53	27
PRESIDIO	.	31	39	38

COUNTY NAME	ATTRITION RATES[1]			
	BLACK	WHITE	HISPANIC	TOTAL
RAINS	12	23	**	21
RANDALL	**	14	34	16
REAGAN	14	19	54	39
REAL	.	**	**	**
RED RIVER	9	20	49	18
REEVES	18	31	44	42
REFUGIO	30	1	11	7
ROBERTS	.	3	50	7
ROBERTSON	38	15	40	26
ROCKWALL	33	18	60	21
RUNNELS	5	21	40	27
RUSK	14	19	49	19
SABINE	7	13	25	12
SAN AUGUSTINE	10	1	29	7
SAN JACINTO	34	32	76	34
SAN PATRICIO	40	23	24	29
SAN SABA	.	4	36	12
SCHLEICHER	.	16	29	25
SCURRY	34	23	51	33
SHACKELFORD	.	16	**	14
SHELBY	34	19	69	25
SHERMAN	.	**	40	4
SMITH	21	25	70	28
SOMERVELL	25	22	41	24
STARR	**	76	48	48
STEPHENS	21	26	77	30
STERLING	.	27	27	27
STONEWALL	**	5	100	2
SUTTON	.	4	20	13
SWISHER	9	18	33	25
TARRANT	36	19	53	27
TAYLOR	29	24	41	28
TERRELL	.	21	41	34
TERRY	36	28	40	36
THROCKMORTON	.	24	**	22
TITUS	13	29	76	33
TOM GREEN	44	17	38	26
TRAVIS	51	26	61	42
TRINITY	9	37	73	32
TYLER	22	21	**	20
UPSHUR	22	23	65	23
UPTON	**	14	23	18
UVALDE	25	**	26	19
VAL VERDE	44	31	35	34
VAN ZANDT	33	26	63	28
VICTORIA	7	22	52	35
WALKER	42	29	79	40
WALLER	34	33	58	37
WARD	37	5	40	23
WASHINGTON	31	**	49	10
WEBB	67	32	48	47
WHARTON	24	13	45	25
WHEELER	.	17	50	22
WICHITA	21	13	35	17
WILBARGER	5	**	49	7
WILLACY	57	15	40	39
WILLIAMSON	33	22	42	25
WILSON	100	14	30	22
WINKLER	22	31	47	41
WISE	0	11	46	14
WOOD	14	22	49	22
YOAKUM	25	13	52	32
YOUNG	53	24	54	26
ZAPATA	.	71	31	34
ZAVALA	.	**	31	28
STATE TOTAL	39	22	48	34